



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

Doctrinal Catechesis Sessions for adults based on
the Church Year, the Liturgy, & the Sunday Scriptures

Breaking Open the Word

by Mary Birmingham

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year C



apud: phillip medhurst

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED. MARK 4:30-32. JAN LUYKEN

excudit: harry kossuth



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

St. Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis' Prayer in Praise of God, Given to Brother Leo

You are holy, Lord, the only God,
and Your deeds are wonderful.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are the Most High.

You are Almighty.

You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.

You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.

You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.

You are love.

You are wisdom.

You are humility.

You are endurance.

You are rest.

You are peace.

You are joy and gladness.

You are justice and moderation.

You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.

You are beauty.

You are gentleness.

You are our protector.

You are our guardian and defender.

You are our courage.

You are our haven and our hope.

You are our faith, our great consolation.

You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord, God
Almighty, Merciful Saviour. Amen.

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Catholic
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& Creed**
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Breaking Open the
Word worksheets
connect with *Catholic
Faith, Life, & Creed*
Doctrinal Sessions.

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Liturgical Context

- ▶ The Gospels of these weeks are from the section of Luke's Gospel that takes place "on the way to Jerusalem." It is a journey every Christian must take.
- ▶ This is the only time in the Lectionary in which we hear from Habakkuk who calls us to have faith in God's providence.
- ▶ Today's liturgy is a call to faith for all believers.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one of the readings.

First reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4

- ▶ Little is known about the prophet Habakkuk. His legacy, however, is his artful writings about his relationship with God.
- ▶ The people were experiencing oppression by the Assyrians. The north (Israel) had been conquered and the south (Judah) was feeling its onslaught.
- ▶ The king of Judah was a vassal of the Assyrians until the Babylonians conquered them.
- ▶ Habakkuk believed God was using the Babylonians to bring an end to the bloodshed that had befallen his people.
- ▶ Habakkuk railed against the sin of the people. He asks God if God is truly willing to punish the righteous alongside the unrighteous.
- ▶ God's response was that his promise would be fulfilled in the appropriate time.
- ▶ The righteous had nothing to worry about—God would care for them.
- ▶ The only response God demanded was faith that God would be true to his promise and in the future.
- ▶ Disciples simply must trust God in all things.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a "brief" story from his or her life. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?
- ▶ Put yourself in the place of the righteous of Habakkuk's day. They are afraid. God tells them to trust him against all evidence to the contrary. How would you feel? How do you feel today when you are in crisis and the challenge is simply to trust God?

- ▶ What does this reading tell us about God?
- ▶ What does this reading teach us about ourselves?
- ▶ What would you feel today if a prophet were to tell us that a foreign power breathing down our neck is a good thing? What does that tell us about the action of God in our lives?

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

- ▶ Paul writes to Timothy exhorting him to hold fast to what he believes.
- ▶ The letter is considered a pastoral letter, one of the letters written by a person in the Pauline school who was writing in Paul's voice—what Paul would have written were he still alive.
- ▶ The scene the author recalls is Paul in prison. He writes to Timothy who is discouraged and ready to give up his preaching ministry.
- ▶ Paul reminds Timothy to call upon the faith he learned from his mother and grandmother.
- ▶ He reminds Timothy of the strength he has been given to persevere.
- ▶ Paul refers to himself as an example. True disciples are called to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.
- ▶ Timothy will, therefore, endure to the end; his faith will sustain and uphold him.



Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a “brief” story or reflection from his or her life. See appendix #2 for an example.

- ▶ In what way, if any, is this letter a relevant letter today?
- ▶ The letter to Timothy also speaks of the role of faith in the time of crisis. When we are ready to falter, we have a reserve to call upon and that reserve is our faith that strengthens us. Have you ever experienced a time when your faith sustained you?
- ▶ What are the obstacles to calling on the faith we have been given? In what way can we overcome those obstacles?
- ▶ Have you ever been discouraged about a direction you have taken, thinking it is the will of God, but in the end questioning if you have what it takes to persevere? What does this letter teach us about perseverance?

Gospel: Luke 17, 5-10

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.) Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?

- ▶ Today's Gospel reminds disciples that they can accomplish God's will in their lives if they have faith.
- ▶ Even the apostles' little faith is enough to accomplish the impossible.
- ▶ Luke insists that God will provide the necessary strength to live the moral life and a life of discipleship if disciples simply *have faith*.
- ▶ Faith is the believer's response to God's unconditional love and the covenant he forged with us.
- ▶ We are not only to have faith, but we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us.
- ▶ The point of today's parable is that there is nothing out of the ordinary in doing what is right. The person who does what is right is doing what they are supposed to be doing—what is expected of them.
- ▶ The slave in the parable worked all day in the field and then came home and cooked and cared for the house with no expectation of thanks because he was doing what was expected of him.
- ▶ Thus, when disciples live the moral life—when they love and forgive their neighbor and their enemies they are doing what is expected. Even people with little faith can accomplish that goal.
- ▶ The Pharisees who touted their own self-importance and righteousness were powerless when it came to their own salvation.
- ▶ Only God saves. Salvation cannot be earned no matter how righteous someone thinks he or she is!
- ▶ We are justified by our faith in Christ. We can do no less than respond with what is expected—pour good works—but those good works do not bring about our salvation or justification.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface the insights in the wider group. Catechist begins by sharing story from his or her life. See appendix #3 for an example. (@ Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ In what way is this a relevant word for us today?
- ▶ What is the primary message of this Gospel?
- ▶ If we are called to do what is expected of us and have been given the faith needed to do what is expected of us, just what today is expected of us?
- ▶ What does the Gospel tell us is expected of us?
- ▶ What evidence is there that you are doing what is expected of you?
- ▶ What is there about the human condition that needs the challenge of this parable?
- ▶ What should you be doing—something that is expected of you—that you are not presently doing? What can you do to change that?

Catechist invites participants to silently reflect on the following question.

- ▶ After reflection on today's liturgy, what one thing is God asking of you at this time in your life?
- ▶ What obstacles stand in the way of following God's call?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Repeat OPENING PRAYER for this session OR

Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

APPENDIX

#1. As we speak I am being asked to trust once again. Things are going very badly for my very mentally ill child. It is time we let him fall and fall hard or he will never get the help he needs. It is a very difficult thing to do. Every time we have tried to do that in the past our love and fear for him kept us from helping him see how desperate his situation is.

Now it is imperative we give him a chance at life. Until his present situation becomes untenable for him nothing will change. We are powerless in any other way to help. This is our only option. It is very difficult to say “no” to a sick child, yet God is calling us to trust him and put our child in his hands. It is a very difficult thing to do, but I know from experience God’s plan is always better than ours.

In a way God is doing the same thing with Israel. Until they experience the error of their ways, they will never appreciate the covenant God forged with them. God is master of *tough love*. I pray for the strength to trust in all things.

#2. I can relate to Timothy in a very small way. I made the decision to move to another parish. I had been in my previous parish for nearly twenty years. The people were my family. I could hardly muster the courage to leave; yet I felt it was God’s will. The transition was very difficult. There were times I wondered if I had made the right decision—if I had truly listened to the word of God. The early days were very difficult and it was difficult to see God’s hand in my decision. However as the weeks turned into months it became very apparent that this was indeed God’s will for my life. I now feel privileged to be part of such an amazing community. The move has challenged growth in me like nothing else could.

#3. One danger of living the Christian life over the long haul is that one can easily fall prey to the self-righteous attitude that “I am righteous in God’s eyes because I do everything that is expected of me. Those people over there are less than I am because they are not doing what is expected of them.” We hear this in many subtle forms in parish life.

Members of a renewal group, for example, sometimes are tempted to feel they have an edge over those who are not in the group. Someone once communicated to me that I was less a Christian because I was not involved in her prayer group. While there is indeed much room for conversion and repentance in my life, my salvation hardly depended on me being part of her prayer group.

The point of this Gospel today is that we are given what we need to accomplish God’s will in our lives. We are simply called to have faith and to trust that God will lead us. When we focus our attention on what others are doing, we are distracted from the faith we are called to live.



Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

Faith
Sacrament of Baptism
Creed

Evangelization
Jesus Christ
Eucharistic Series

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

FAITH

Today's liturgy is a catechism on faith. God invites us to persevere and have faith in all things, especially in times of crisis. Thus today's liturgy is an invitation to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about FAITH.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Today's liturgy calls us to have faith. Faith strengthens us to live the Christian life. Baptism is a response to that faith. Those who have faith in Christ are baptized into Christ's life, death and resurrection. Baptism also strengthens us to live a life of faith. Thus, today's liturgy also invites us to focus our attention on the SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

NICENE CREED

Christians are called to have faith. Faith in what? The Nicene Creed is the Christian's profession of faith—that which we are expected to embrace and upon which we are to stake our lives. It is spelled out for us in the Nicene Creed. Thus today would be an appropriate time to focus our doctrinal session on the NICENE CREED.

EVANGELIZATION

If today's Gospel is a catechism on faith, then the next step once faith is established is to share that faith with others. Christians are called to share the Good News—their faith—with the rest of the world. We cannot keep our faith hidden under a bushel basket. Thus, today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about EVANGELIZATION.

JESUS CHRIST

Today's liturgy is a clarion call to faith. Our faith is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ. Every discussion of faith centers on the object of our faith—the crucified and risen Christ. Thus it is very appropriate that we focus our attention today on the person of JESUS CHRIST.

EUCCHARIST SERIES:

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Thus any Sunday would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part ____ of the Eucharistic Series.